

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A system for watermarking data associated with one or more products, the system comprising one or more software components collectively operable to:

5 generate an algorithm for creating a particular pattern in data associated with one or more products available from one or more sellers, the data being stored in one or more databases accessible to one or more buyer computers for search queries for data associated with certain of the products, the pattern facilitating identification of a copy of the data and not substantially affecting authorized use of the data by the one or more buyer computers or users associated with the buyer computers; and

10 apply the algorithm to the data to create the particular pattern in the data.

2. The system of Claim 1, wherein the one or more databases comprise seller databases associated with a particular seller.

15 3. The system of Claim 1, wherein the one or more databases comprise a shared data repository.

20 4. The system of Claim 1, wherein the data comprise one or more product attribute values, seller attribute values, and product descriptions for each of the one or more products.

5. The system of Claim 1, wherein the algorithm is a sifting function.

25 6. The system of Claim 1, wherein the pattern comprises a plurality of non-printable American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) characters inserted throughout the data according to a pre-defined arrangement.

30 7. The system of Claim 6, wherein the pattern comprises a particular set of non-printable ASCII characters appearing after each instance of a particular group of characters in the data.

8. The system of Claim 1, wherein the pattern comprises a plurality of insertion, deletions, or modifications of printable American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) characters in the data according to a pre-defined arrangement.

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9. The system of Claim 8, wherein the pattern comprises each instance of a particular group of characters in the data being underscored throughout the data.

10 10. The system of Claim 1, wherein the software components are collectively further operable to determine a first sum of numerical values of bytes representing the data stored in the one or more databases for later comparison with a second sum of numerical values of bytes representing data from another source to determine whether the data from the other source is a copy of the data from the one or more databases.

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11. A method for watermarking data associated with one or more products, comprising:

generating an algorithm for creating a particular pattern in data associated with one or more products available from one or more sellers, the data being stored in one or more databases accessible to one or more buyer computers for search queries for data associated with certain of the products, the pattern facilitating identification of a copy of the data and not substantially affecting authorized use of the data by the one or more buyer computers or users associated with the buyer computers; and

applying the algorithm to the data to create the particular pattern in the data.

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12. The method of Claim 11, wherein the one or more databases comprise seller databases associated with a particular seller.

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13. The method of Claim 11, wherein the one or more databases comprise a shared data repository.

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14. The method of Claim 11, wherein the data comprise one or more product attribute values, seller attribute values, and product descriptions for each of the one or more products.

15. The method of Claim 11, wherein the algorithm is a sifting function.

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16. The method of Claim 11, wherein the pattern comprises a plurality of non-printable American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) characters inserted throughout the data according to a pre-defined arrangement.

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17. The method of Claim 16, wherein the pattern comprises a particular set of non-printable ASCII characters appearing after each instance of a particular group of characters in the data.

18. The method of Claim 11, wherein the pattern comprises a plurality of insertion, deletions, or modifications of printable American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) characters in the data according to a pre-defined arrangement.

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19. The method of Claim 18, wherein the pattern comprises each instance of a particular group of characters in the data being underscored throughout the data.

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20. The method of Claim 11, further comprising determining a first sum of numerical values of bytes representing the data stored in the one or more databases for later comparison with a second sum of numerical values of bytes representing data from another source to determine whether the data from the other source is a copy of the data from the one or more databases.

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21. Software for watermarking data associated with one or more products, the software embodied in a computer-readable medium and when executed operable to:

5 generate an algorithm for creating a particular pattern in data associated with one or more products available from one or more sellers, the data being stored in one or more databases accessible to one or more buyer computers for search queries for data associated with certain of the products, the pattern facilitating identification of a copy of the data and not substantially affecting authorized use of the data by the one or more buyer computers or users associated with the buyer computers; and

10 apply the algorithm to the data to create the particular pattern in the data.

22. The software of Claim 21, wherein the one or more databases comprise seller databases associated with a particular seller.

15 23. The software of Claim 21, wherein the one or more databases comprise a shared data repository.

20 24. The software of Claim 21, wherein the data comprise one or more product attribute values, seller attribute values, and product descriptions for each of the one or more products.

25. The software of Claim 21, wherein the algorithm is a sifting function.

26. The software of Claim 21, wherein the pattern comprises a plurality of non-printable American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) characters inserted throughout the data according to a pre-defined arrangement.

30 27. The software of Claim 26, wherein the pattern comprises a particular set of non-printable ASCII characters appearing after each instance of a particular group of characters in the data.

28. The software of Claim 21, wherein the pattern comprises a plurality of insertion, deletions, or modifications of printable American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) characters in the data according to a pre-defined arrangement.

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29. The software of Claim 28, wherein the pattern comprises each instance of a particular group of characters in the data being underscored throughout the data.

10 30. The software of Claim 21, further operable to determine a first sum of numerical values of bytes representing the data stored in the one or more databases for later comparison with a second sum of numerical values of bytes representing data from another source to determine whether the data from the other source is a copy of the data from the one or more databases.

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31. A system for watermarking data associated with one or more products, comprising:

means for generating an algorithm for creating a particular pattern in data associated with one or more products available from one or more sellers, the data being stored in one or more databases accessible to one or more buyer computers for search queries for data associated with certain of the products, the pattern facilitating identification of a copy of the data and not substantially affecting authorized use of the data by the one or more buyer computers or users associated with the buyer computers; and

10 means for applying the algorithm to the data to create the particular pattern in the data.

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32. A system for watermarking data associated with one or more products, the system comprising one or more software components collectively operable to:

5 generate an algorithm for creating a particular pattern in data associated with one or more products available from one or more sellers, the data comprising one or more product attribute values, seller attribute values, and product descriptions for each of the one or more products, the data being stored in one or more databases accessible to one or more buyer computers for search queries for data associated with certain of the products, the pattern comprising a plurality of non-printable American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) characters inserted throughout 10 the data according to a pre-defined arrangement, the pattern facilitating identification of a copy of the data and not substantially affecting authorized use of the data by the one or more buyer or users associated with the buyer computers; and

15 apply the algorithm to the data to create the particular pattern in the data.

33. A method for watermarking data associated with one or more products, comprising:

20 generating an algorithm for creating a particular pattern in data associated with one or more products available from one or more sellers, the data comprising one or more product attribute values, seller attribute values, and product descriptions for each of the one or more products, the data being stored in one or more databases accessible to one or more buyers for search queries for data associated with certain of the products, the pattern comprising a plurality of non-printable American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) characters inserted throughout the data according to a pre-defined arrangement, the pattern facilitating identification of a 25 copy of the data and not substantially affecting authorized use of the data by the one or more buyer computers or users associated with the buyer computers; and

applying the algorithm to the data to create the particular pattern in the data.

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34. Software for watermarking data associated with one or more products, the software embodied in a computer-readable medium and when executed operable to:

5 generate an algorithm for creating a particular pattern in data associated with one or more products available from one or more sellers, the data comprising one or more product attribute values, seller attribute values, and product descriptions for each of the one or more products, the data being stored in one or more databases accessible to one or more buyers for search queries for data associated with certain of the products, the pattern comprising a plurality of non-printable American Standard 10 Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) characters inserted throughout the data according to a pre-defined arrangement, the pattern facilitating identification of a copy of the data and not substantially affecting authorized use of the data by the one or more buyer computers or users associated with the buyer computers; and

15 apply the algorithm to the data to create the particular pattern in the data.

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